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Beautifying Country Homes

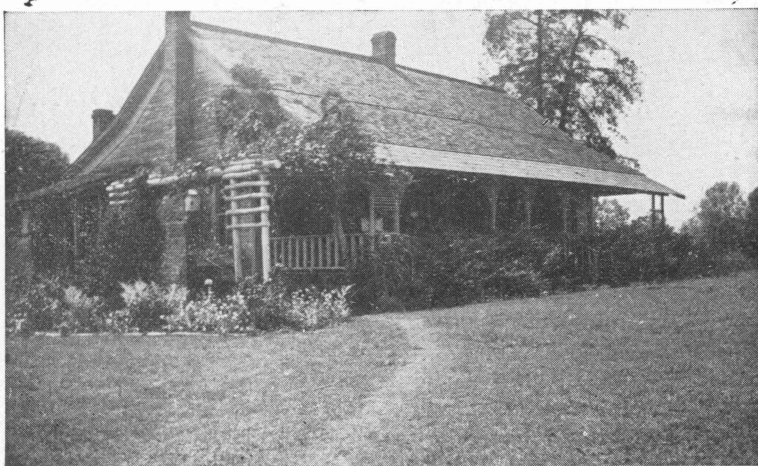
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Beautifying Country Homes

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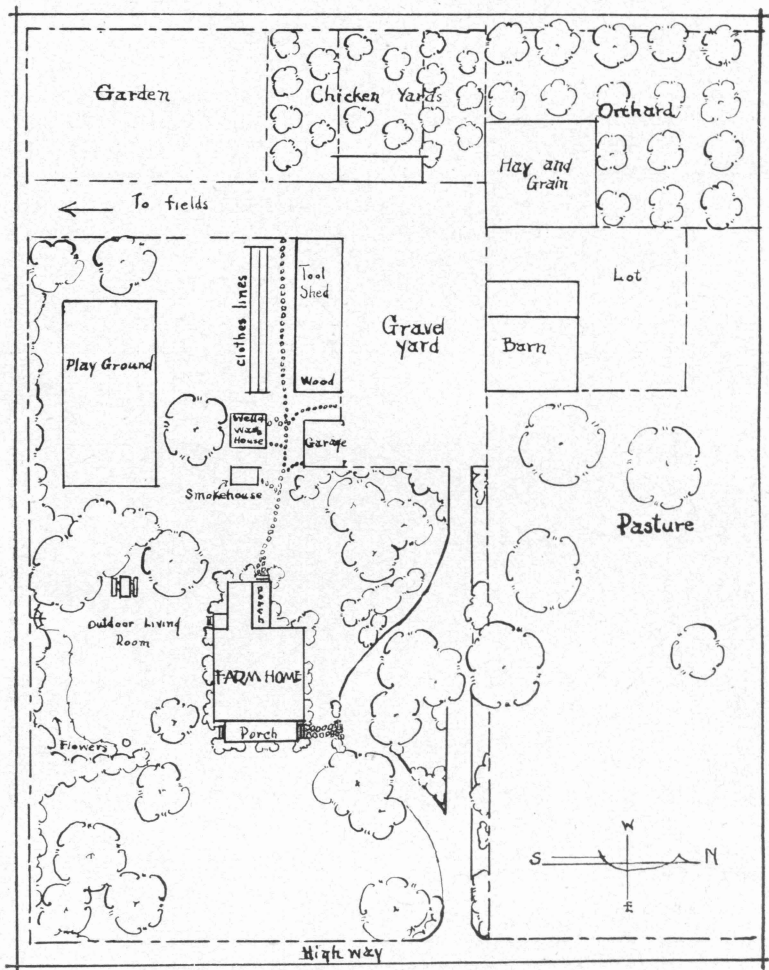
COUNTRY HOMES need a style of landscape treatment different from that suitable for town houses, because the atmosphere is different. In town, where plots are laid off in blocks and lots, and where neighbors are close, a formal planting inclosing a small area is appropriate and attractive. But in the country much space and a number of outbuildings and constructions besides the house have to be considered; there are no close neighbors. Many native plants may already be growing about the



"The background of trees, the open lawn and the shrubs about the house give this country home the appearance of being lived in and cared for."

grounds, so an informal planting which is in keeping with the inviting, free atmosphere of country life is best. Besides being different in style, landscape development in the country has some advantages because soil, sand, stone, wood, native plants, fertilizer, and working equipment are

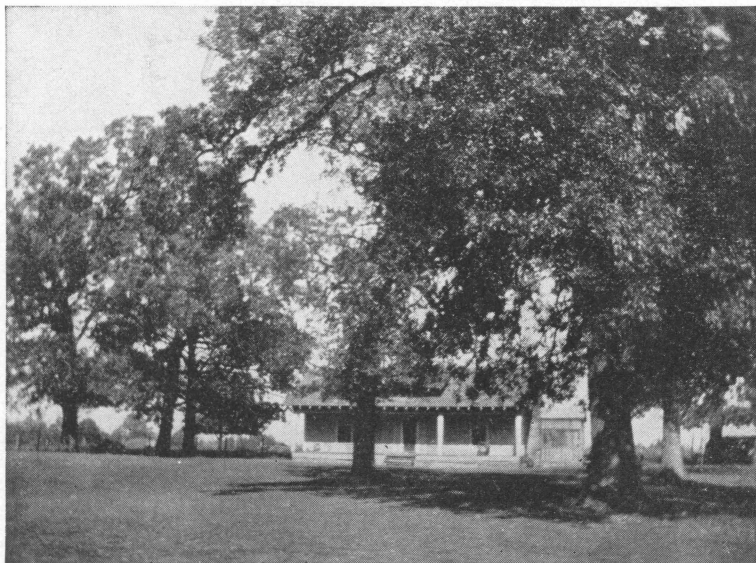
easily available. A well landscaped country home may be achieved for very little money if plans are carefully made and work is carried out accordingly. The whole improvement program should be mapped at once, from rearranging the farm buildings, to making the rose garden. A definite amount of work should be planned for each month until the last rose is planted.



A plan for arrangement of a Texas farm home.

Select the Home Site for Use and Beauty

A rise in the ground that slopes away in all directions, having trees grouped near the back of it, makes an ideal location for a farm home. The dust, and noise of the traffic will not be constant annoyances if the house is set back from the road. The arrangement and planting of the whole farmstead should take account of the fact that the house is the center of interest. No building or planting should eclipse its importance in the landscape picture. For that reason barns and outbuildings should be grouped according to use in an area back of the house. They should



High branched trees do not obstruct the front view and they keep the place from appearing bald.

help form for the place the sort of background that indicates intelligent farm activities. Tall crops like fruit trees and corn should flank the sides and back of the building site. If there is field space between the house and highway, low crops like cotton and small grains are suitable.

Arrange the Approach for a Good First Impression

The approach to a country home should take advantage of the best view. Usually a side entrance to the yard is advisable in order to leave the front lawn unbroken. Cars may then be driven to the side for parking. Where it is necessary for trucks and wagons to use the same entrance, the side drive can divide in two at the entrance with one drive going to the house and the other to the barn.



Natural grouping of trees is more attractive than arranging in rows.

The farm housewife's complaint that all her company comes in through the back door may be overcome by some rearrangement of the approach. A turning area and shade for parking near the front may be needed; or if there is a fence, placing the yard gate at the spot where cars must park and providing a wide and inviting walk to the front door might help. Perhaps the front steps could be changed to the side of the porch to make a front entrance more convenient. If the back door is very prominent or is near the entrance at the side, a planting may be arranged that will rather obscure it.

Walks, Drives, and Fences Go Places and Do Things

Walks, drives, fences, walls, and other structures related to landscape gardening are meant for use, and should be left off unless they are needed. They should be of a pleasing type, when they are used. They do not need their presence accented by borders of flowers, white washed stones, bricks, or cement curbs. If, in scale, design, material, and arrangement these structures harmonize with the house and grounds they provide certain fundamental decorative effects without extra adornment.

Walks and drives should lead as directly and conveniently as possible to their destination, without spoiling the beauty of the landscape. Easy curves along the line that traffic naturally takes afford the best arrangement. Sometimes plantings may be arranged to make a desired curve seem natural.

Front walks should be wide enough for two or three people to walk abreast, and smooth enough that high-heeled shoes are safe. Back walks may be narrower. All walks should be well drained. Gravel, cinders, crushed stone, flagstones, and broken cement are among suitable materials. Cement walks are seldom desirable from the artistic standpoint because their hard, white, glaring lines are too severe for the informal rural landscape. With lamp black added to darken it, cement

might be used for a back walk where there is much traffic. Stepping stones placed where they will be easy to walk on make good back walks. Where the yard is small, the drainage good, and the traffic light, the walk or drive may simply be worn over the grass sod.

When gyp, caliche, or white gravel is used for a drive something like oil or macadam should be used to subdue the long bright stretch of road.

A farm home unfenced is in keeping with the idea of space and freedom that is usually associated with country life. A country house surrounded by spacious grounds yet cut off from them by a high paling fence or a monotonous hedge is too common a sight. Since it is not always possible to do without fences, a type should be chosen that blends with the general design of the place and calls little attention to itself. When in doubt one would do

best to have a simple wire fence tightly stretched, with uniform, inconspicuous posts. As with walks and drives, the material used for fencing depends upon the setting and the type of house. For instance, a brick or stucco house suggests an iron fence, and brick or gravel walks. A ranch house of rock or rough timber with a large yard, might need a flagstone walk and a rock fence. A colonial house would need a gravel or cobblestone walk, and a plain white picket fence.



Simple walks made from flat stones are satisfactory and pleasing.

Trees Form the Background

Trees planted in groups at the side and back of the house where they are needed for shade, form a pleasing background and help to shut out or subordinate the view of the outbuildings. Several trees of the same kind planted in natural groups, as one sees them in the woods, give a more harmonious and restful effect than trees planted in straight rows. Where the house faces west, and trees are needed at the front, high branched varieties should be chosen so that the line of vision to the front is kept open. In any case there should be a few trees along the sides and front so that the house does not appear too bold; but there should never be so many that the house seems to be hiding behind them.

Such trees as the elm, pecan, oak, walnut, pine, and maple when adapted to the climate and soil should be used for shade around the house. Unusual or peculiar trees, such as the weeping mulberry or the umbrella catalpa, are out of place in most rural landscapes. Trees that make a great litter of dropping fruit and leaves or whose beauty of form must be sacrificed to a fruit crop should be replaced with standard shade trees.



Good screening. The high buildings are not entirely hidden but are subordinated to the view of the house.

Small trees like the plum, redbud, dogwood, yaupon, and haw are of good size for framing the view of a small house, for use in screening the view of a barn, or for adding interest to the shrub border.

In case trees are needed for windbreaks, they may be planted in a straight line protecting the whole group of farm buildings from the objectionable winds. The lines may be softened on the inside by irregular spacing of trees or shrubs, planted against the windbreak. In north or west Texas a two or three row planting containing at least one row of low branched, stocky evergreens like Arizona cypress or Chinese arborvitae, and one row or more of a deciduous tree like the Chinese elm, or Russian mulberry, makes a good windbreak.

A Lawn Is Nature's Carpet

The lawn from an artistic standpoint corresponds to the canvas on which a picture is painted. It is the foreground and background that holds together the parts of the whole design. The washed away, clean swept, glaring yard, and the yard that is smothered with shrubs and flowers, when compared to a lawn, seem as much out of date as a hoop skirt. That sort of yard, like the hoop skirt, has given way to a more practical arrangement. A good sod keeps the soil from washing away;



This one needs high branched trees nearer the front.

it keeps down dust, and glare, and mud, and weeds. It reduces the summer temperature about the house through evaporation and lessened reflection. It requires less work to keep neat when once it is well established than any other form of yard arrangement.

A country place should have a large lawn. It is disappointing to see a farm home with generous fields about it, cramped in upon a small "art square" of green lawn in a tiny fenced inclosure. A country home should seem to have breathing space; it should settle freely in its grounds; its lawn area should be spacious; trees and shrubs should be so grouped and spaced that they appear to watch over it but not to smother it, or hamper its repose. No rule of areas will hold in every case. Some say that a lawn should be five, some 20 times as large as the area of the house. That depends upon the house, its location, and its surroundings; but in any case, there should be lawn space enough to allow an uncrowded effect. A good lawn is always cleared of unrelated shrubs and flower groups so that it affords an open approach; and it certainly should have one space big enough and smooth enough to accomodate a community party in outdoor games.

Sometimes a lawn that is really large enough has its effects spoiled by a monotonous, straight lined hedge that accents its limits and leads



Nature's carpet smoothly spread for comfort, beauty and use.

nowhere. The sweep of the lawn and its side borders properly planted, preferably with native shrubs, should converge for the climax of interest at the house. The arrangement should seem to invite the visitor to the main building of the farmstead and not to just a little front yard. Border plantings are meant to be pleasant inclosures for the lawn and should form an edge and direct the attention of the passerby to the house without interfering with the desirable views from the house and yard.

Bermuda and buffalo grass are two excellent native grasses. Their heavy sods stand freezes and drouths but come out green again with the first rains and warm days. Buffalo grass requires less frequent mowing than Bermuda, and is more easily exterminated when it gets out of bounds. Kentucky blue grass is good, but it requires cool climate and water. Carpet grass is hardy, makes a good sod, and grows well in the shade.

Plant the Work Area for Privacy

The work and recreation units in the back and side yards are separated from the front by shrubbery planted in natural groups. Sod extends throughout these units. Shade, shelter, and convenient grouping of the working apparatus for the various activities, from the weekly washing to the annual beef canning, make the work less tiring. Well routed walks and sanitary disposal of waste and rubbish encourage keeping the back yard in its best shape. The laundry equipment should be convenient to water, fuel, and a grassy, sunshiny space for drying. All other work units should be located in this section of the yard. Planting in this section will come second to work arrangements, but it should at least afford an enclosure well screened from the other parts of the yard.

A sodded area between the house and barns, cut off from view of the front or living quarters of the house by trees and shrubs, makes a good spot for unhitching the teams and for temporary parking of farm implements.

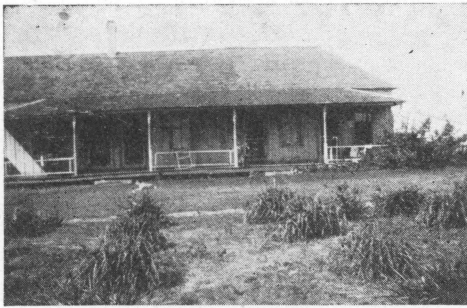
Join the Outdoor Living Room to the Kitchen and Living Room

The side or back yard where there is easy access to the kitchen is a suitable place for the outdoor living room, because the serving of outdoor meals is made easy. If at the same time, the area could be placed so that in a way it would be an extension of the living room, the location would be ideal. Shade, a carpety sod, and the privacy afforded by informal shrubbery plantings, make an attractive living spot. Other things may be added to suit the particular tastes and activities of those who use it. Bird baths, pools, rockeries, special flower gardens, seats, tables, statuary, sun dials, pergolas, summer houses, sand piles, and play equipment find their places in this section of the yard, and never on

the front lawn. Where flowers and roses are used, they are attractive in masses against a background of shrubbery. Opening out from the outdoor living room there may be a tennis court or general play ground.

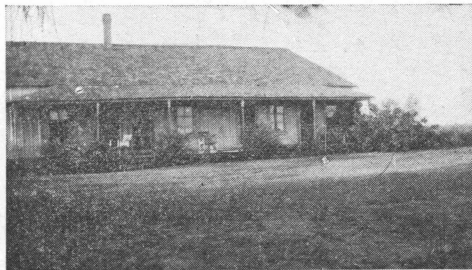
Plant Material Varies With Use

Since plants play such an important part in landscaping the rural home,



Here we have an attempt to beautify wrongly directed—the plantings in front detract from the appearance of the home.

particular attention should be paid to selecting and placing each plant in relation to its purpose in the whole design. One shrub may be designed to help frame the picture or some lovely part of it, another to cut off some undesirable view, and another to soften a harsh line or bold corner. Still others may be used to accentuate some pleasant spot, to



Just a lawn cleared off and a few plantings around the house but what a changed appearance! This lawn will accomodate a community party.



A place in which to rest in the "cool of the evening."

add a needed note of color, or to afford background for other plantings. A plant suitable for one use would not be suitable for another. It is quite common to see specimen evergreens, like Arizona cypress, in plantings about the foundations of houses. The plants look quite pleasing at first, but when grown to tree-like size they swallow up the house. Such a planting is due to lack of information or to a disregard of the fact that particular plants grow into sizes unsuitable for foundation plantings.



Tree planting will be successful whenever it is done with care. Here is shown a small plant which has been taken up with a ball of dirt around it and securely wrapped to keep from dislodging the dirt while the plant is being removed to its abiding place.

In any arrangement, several plants of the same kind should be used together, and all the plantings grouped so that a harmonious arrangement of color, texture, size, and form results rather than a display of individual showy plants each clamoring for attention.

Graceful, informal plants like bridal wreath, coralberry, jasmine, and abelia fit the rural landscape; specimen evergreens that are appropriate about public buildings, in cemeteries, and in formal gardens, do not.

Shrubs and trees that appear in the natural landscape are always in good taste. The type of architecture, the kind of native growth, the amount of sun and shade, the contour of the land, the space and the nearness to property line and to neighbors, will affect the type and arrangement of planting. As with trees, standard shrubs and those which will remain lovely for a long time with ordinary care are preferred to those that depend on constant replacement for continued effect. A good proportion of evergreens should be used in the planting so that the home will be attractive the year around.



Rooting from cuttings or seeds is one way of obtaining plants when money is scarce. The price is paid in time, labor and patience instead of dollars and cents.

To be Attractive a Place Must be Well Kept

The final attractiveness of a place depends upon the sort of maintenance given it. Many home grounds that defy accepted principles of arrangement are attractive simply because they are neat, orderly, and excellently kept. Chimneys, porches, roofs, gates, outbuildings, and fences in good repair speak well of the character of the family; so do tools, wood piles, and farm implements that have a place and an orderly arrangement.

Good health and pleasant living demand that the entire yard and barn-yard be well drained, and that there be sanitary and inoffensive disposal of waste water, garbage, sewage, tin cans, and rubbish.

Plants in a well kept place are healthy and vigorous, free from disease and accident injuries, and show evidence of proper pruning. Plants sheared to fixed forms or sheared off along straight lines are unnatural and out of place. Properly kept shrub beds are free from weeds, and litter, and from spotty, insignificant plantings and annuals. They show a fine dust mulch, or a mulch of straw, manure or leaves. They have no edgings such as rocks, bricks or cement, but have neatly cut grass edges. A good lawn is heavy, smooth and velvety, whether it is the green of spring, or the brown of winter.

A Measuring Stick Will Help

A score card based on accepted landscape principles may be used in analyzing the grounds of the country home. Its use will help to determine the reasons for certain pleasing effects, and to locate the weak points that need correcting.

I. General attractiveness	35
II. General arrangement of grounds	30
Location of house	5
Grouping of trees	5
Lawn	5
Walks, drives, fences	5
Work area	5
Outdoor living room	5
III. Plant material	15
Suitable to position	5
Permanency	5
Harmony and variety	5
IV. Maintenance	20
Neatness and order	5
Sanitation	5
Health and vigor of plants	5
Condition of lawns and shrub beds ..	5
Total	100

Try Reading Some of These

Other bulletins that teach the correct principles for landscaping the rural home may be obtained from the following addresses:

Plans and Plantings for Georgia Homes, Extension Service of Georgia State College of Agriculture, Athens, Georgia.

Beautifying the Home Grounds, by Fred W. Westcourt, C.I.A., Denton, Texas.

Home Beautification, No. 118, Extension Service, Auburn, Alabama.

Planning and Planting the Farmstead, No. 178, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

Planning the Farmstead, F.B. 1132, A. and M. College, College Station, Texas.

The following bulletins which teach methods may be secured from the Extension Service, A. and M. College, College Station, Texas, unless another address is given.

F.B. No. 157—The Propagation of Plants

1567—Propagation of Trees and Shrubs

1381—Herbaceous Perennials

1171—Growing Annual Flowering Plants

750—Roses for the Home

1547—Rose Diseases, Their Cause and Control

1495—Insect Enemies of the Flower Garden

1591—Transplanting Trees and Shrubs

1208—Trees for Town and City Streets

1209—Planting and Care of Street Trees

1677—Planting and Care of Lawns

Leaflets on special subjects

Bulletin 447—Trees and Shrubs of Northwest Texas, Experiment Station, College Station, Texas.

Bulletin 72—Foundation Plantings for Florida Homes, Extension Service, Gainesville, Florida.

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